

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03
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FM AMEMBASSY DACCA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3296
INFO AMCONSUL CALCUTTA
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

S E C R E T DACCA 0336

E.O. 11652 GDS
TAGS: PFOR, BG, IN
SUBJ: BDG VIEWS ON FARAKKA NEGOTIATIONS

REF: (A) 76 DACCA 6283 (NOTAL)
(B) DACCA 0272

1. DURING A DISCUSSION OF OTHER MATTERS ON
JANUARY 20, FOREIGN SECRETARY TABARAK HUSAIN TOLD
ME THAT THE INDIANS GAVE ABSOLUTELY NOTHING DURING
THE JANUARY 14-15 ROUND OF NEGOTIATIONS IN DACCA
ON UTILIZATION OF GANGES WATER. IN FACT, THEY
THREATENED TO RETREAT FROM THE 30,000 CUSECS DURING
THE LEAN PERIOD WHICH THEY HAD OFFERED IN DECEMBER.
(COMMENT: DOES THIS MAKE THEM INDIAN GIVERS?)

2. JAGJIVAN RAM AND OTHERS ON THE INDIAN DELEGATION
ARGUED STRONGLY THAT THEY WERE HAVING REAL TROUBLE
WITH THE WEST BENGAL GOVERNMENT, WHICH STRONGLY
RESISTED ANYTHING ABOVE A FIFTY-FIFTY SPLIT WHICH WOULD
GIVE EACH PARTY 27,500 CUSECS. TABARAK SAID BANGLADESH
KNEW THERE HAD BEEN POLITICAL TROUBLE IN WEST BANGAL
AND BETWEEN WEST BANGAL AND THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

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BUT IT COULD NOT TELL WHETHER DIVISION OF GANGES
WATER WAS AN ELEMENT IN THIS DIFFICULTY OR WHETHER
THE GOI DELEGATION WAS MERELY USING THIS AS AN
EXCUSE FOR ADOPTING A HARD LINE WITH THE BDG.

3. ON SPECIFICS, TABATAK SAID THE GOI DELEGATION
WOULD NOT BUDGE ABOVE 30,000 CUSECS AND, AS NOTED

ABOVE, EVEN STRONGLY IMPLIED THEY MIGHT HAVE TO FALL BELOW THIS FOR DOMESTIC POLITICAL REASONS. THE INDIANS ALSO PRESSED FOR A LONG RANGE STUDY OF WATER UTILIZATION IN THE AREA. BANGLADESH WAS PERFECTLY AGREEABLE BUT PREFERRED TO LIMIT SUCH A STUDY TO THE GANGES BASIN. HOWEVER, IF AGREEMENT WAS POSSIBLE ON OTHER ISSUES, BANGLADESH WOULD BE WILLING TO BROADEN THE STUDY TO INCLUDE OTHER AREAS (I.E., THE BRAHMAPUTRA) AS WELL. THE INDIAN DELEGATION ALSO INSISTED THAT THERE NOW HAD TO BE A NEGOTIATING SESSION IN NEW DELHI.

4. TABARAK HUSAIN SAID HE IS CONCERNED THAT ELECTIONS HAVE BEEN CALLED IN INDIA AND THEY WILL NOW BE DEALING WITH A LAME DUCK GOVERNMENT. INDIRA GANDHI MIGHT USE THIS AS RATIONALE FOR FURTHER DELAY IN REACHING A SETTLEMENT, AND THUS THE WATER PROBLEM MIGHT BECOME AN ELECTION ISSUE WITH FURTHER HARDENING OF THE INDIAN POSITION. ON THE OTHER HAND, TABARAK MUSED THAT MRS. GANDHI MIGHT WANT TO APPEAR MAGNANIMOUS ON THE EVE OF ELECTIONS AND SHOW HOW SHE HAD IMPROVED RELATIONS WITH BANGLADESH. IN EITHER EVENT, HE SAID THE BANGLADESH DELEGATION IS GOING TO NEW DELHI WITH OPEN MINDS AND WILL DO THEIR BEST TO REACH AGREEMENT. HE DID NOT, HOWEVER, SHOW NEARLY AS MUCH OPTIMISM AS BEFORE THE LAST ROUND OF TALKS.

5. COMMENT: WHILE TABARAK DID NOT SAY SO, CHANCES ARE THE BANGLADESH DELEGATION WAS EQUALLY ADAMANT
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IN THE JANUARY 14-15 NEGOTIATIONS. HAVING WALKED TO THE BRING, THEY MAY BE A BIT MORE WILLING TO COMPROMISE. TABARAK SAW ONE SMALL RAY OF HOPE. AT THE AIRPORT WHEN THE INDIANS WERE LEAVING, HE TOLD INDIAN FOREIGN SECRETARY JAGAT MEHTA THAT THE WAY THINGS STOOD HE SAW LITTLE USE FOR FURTHER TALKS IN NEW DELHI. MEHTA DISAGREED, URGED TABARAK TO COME WITH THE BDG DELEGATION AND SAID WITH A LITTLE GIVE ON BOTH SIDES HE THOUGHT A COMPROMISE WAS POSSIBLE. THE BANGLADESHIS LEAVE TOMORROW TO RESUME TALKS IN NEW DELHI.
MASTERS

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